REMARKS

Entry and consideration of this Preliminary Amendment are respectfully requested prior to or concurrent with calculation of the filing fees.

The present application is a division of predecessor application U.S. Serial No. 09/914,013, which, in turn is a 35 U.S.C. § 371 filing of International PCT Application No. PCT/JP00/09153. Accordingly, a cross-referencing statement has been added to the specification. Also, the specification for the division has been amended to place it in the same form as that of the 09/914,013 application.

By this Preliminary Amendment, claims 1-10 have been cancelled and new claims 11-16 have been added.

Applicants respectfully request entry of this Preliminary Amendment.

Respectfully submitted,
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October 16, 2003

MARKED-UP PREVIOUS VERSION OF THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 14 as follows:

A guide ring 54, which has a feature of the present invention, is put on an upper peripheral part of the stage 36. More concretely, the guide ring 54 has a cross section of a shape resembling an inverted letter L, is formed of a ceramic material, such as Al_2O_3, or quartz glass, and is fitted closely on the upper peripheral part of the stage 36. The guide ring 54 has a guide ring body ~~59,~~ 59 which has a horizontal part 56 ~~, and~~ that defines an inner peripheral lower surface 56A and an outer peripheral lower surface 56B, both extending in parallel to the support surface 36A of the stage 36. The inner peripheral lower surface 56A is parallel with the outer peripheral lower surface 56B but is vertically higher than the lower surface. Guide ring body 59 also has a vertical part 58 in contact with the side surface of the stage 36. An inner circumference of the horizontal part 56 is tapered downward and toward a center of the stage 36 to form a tapered guide surface 60. Thus, when lowering a wafer W supported on the lifter pins 42 to mount the wafer W on the support surface 36A, if there is a positional error of the wafer W, the guide surface 60 corrects the positional error of the wafer W and guides the wafer W to a correct position on the support surface 36A.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 33 as follows:

An annular cut-off portion 62 having a substantially fixed thickness (see Figs. 2 and 3) is formed at an inner peripheral part of the lower surface of the horizontal part 56 of the guide ring body 59. Thus, the inner peripheral part of the horizontal part 56 is thin, and a particle generation preventing space 64 having a shape of a very thin ring with a cross section resembling an elongate rectangle is formed between an inner peripheral lower surface ~~under surface~~ 56A of the part 56 and the support surface 36A of the stage 36.

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

11. (New) A film deposition method using a film deposition system including a processing vessel capable of being evacuated to make a vacuum therein, a stage placed in the processing vessel and capable of supporting an object to be processed thereon, and a guide ring placed on or above the stage so as to surround an outer circumference of the object to be processed when mounted on the stage, the guide ring being capable of guiding the object to be processed onto the stage during mounting of the object to be processed onto the stage, wherein a particle generation preventing space is formed between an inner peripheral part of a lower surface of the guide ring and an upper surface of the stage, the method comprising:

mounting an object to be processed onto the stage;

conducting a film deposition process on the object to be processed, whereupon unnecessary films deposited on wall surfaces defining the particle generation preventing space form peak portions during the conducting of the film deposition process;

removing the object to be processed from on the stage; and

cleaning the film deposition system to remove the unnecessary films and the peak portions thereof.

12. (New) A film deposition method according to claim 11, wherein

the cleaning of the film deposition system is conducted after a predetermined number of objects to be processed have been processed.

13. (New) A film deposition method according to claim 11, wherein

the unnecessary films peel off the wall surfaces and accumulate in the particle generation preventing space thereby not to disperse as particles into the processing vessel, before the cleaning.

14. (New) A film deposition method according to claim 11, wherein

the particle generation preventing space has a height of about 0.2 mm or more.

15. (New) A film deposition method according to claim 11, wherein

the particle generation preventing space has a radial dimension of about 2 mm or more.

16. (New) A film deposition method according to claim 11, wherein

the particle generation preventing space has a height and a radial dimension, and
a ratio of the radial dimension to the height is 10 or more.